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[Laptops](#)

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LG Dare (Verizon Wireless)

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CNET Editors' Rating

[4.0 stars](#)

Excellent

Average User Rating

[3.5 stars](#)

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Editors' review



Reviewed by:
 Nicole Lee
 Reviewed on: 06/27/2008
 Updated on: 07/18/2008
 Released on: 06/26/2008

The good: The LG Dare has an intuitive touch-screen interface, an advanced 3.2-megapixel camera, a full HTML browser, EV-DO Rev. A, and plenty of other powerful features. It also has excellent call quality.

The bad: The LG Dare's touch interface has a slight learning curve, and we weren't too pleased with the handwriting interface. Also, the Web browsing experience was quite disappointing.

The

4.0 stars

CNET editors' rating

Design: **8.0**

8.0/10 Features: **8.0**

8.0/10 Performance: **9.0**

9.0/10 [Editors' rating explained](#)

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bottom line: The LG Dare is an innovative and feature-rich handset, with several surprises that set it apart from other touch-screen phones.



[Photo gallery:](#)
[LG Dare](#)

One of the most notable fallouts of the [Apple iPhone](#) launch last year is the ever-growing trend of touch-screen phones. LG was one of the first manufacturers out of the gate with phones such as the [LG Voyager](#) and the [LG Vu](#) dazzling us with features that we couldn't get on the iPhone, like live mobile TV and 3G connectivity. Samsung then came blazing out with the [Instinct](#), a phone that directly targets the iPhone with visual voice mail, integrated GPS, and corporate e-mail support. Yet, many of these phones still walked on familiar ground with its design and features.

LG's latest handset, however, dares to take things in a different direction. The appropriately named LG Dare presents a few tricks we haven't seen before in the touch-screen phone genre. For example, you can drag and drop icons to make your own customized shortcuts on the home screen, or you can use a drawing pad to sketch ideas or draw a map, which can then be sent via MMS to a friend. The Dare also has one of the most advanced cameras we've seen on a touch-screen phone--its 3.2-megapixel camera has settings like face detection, noise reduction, panorama photo stitching, and a SmartPic technology designed for taking photos in low light. The built-in camcorder can even record high-speed video and play it back in slow-motion, which is a first for U.S. camera phones. We certainly wouldn't want to call this an iPhone killer since it doesn't have features such as Wi-Fi, and its Web browser and media player aren't as good. However, the Dare is a very appealing alternative for Verizon customers who want a touch-screen phone with a difference. The LG Dare is priced competitively at \$199 after a \$50 mail-in rebate and a two-year service agreement.

Design

Like all touch-screen phones, the LG Dare's design is dominated by a large display covering almost the entirety of the phone's front surface. Indeed, the only visible keys on the front are the Call, Clear/Voice command, and End/Power keys at the very bottom. The Dare is quite a bit smaller than both the iPhone and the Samsung Instinct, measuring only 4.1 inches long by 2.2 inches wide by 0.5 inch thick. It has a stainless steel border along its sides, and a black soft touch surface on the back that gives it a nice grip in the hand. It weighs about 3.76 ounces, which gives it a light yet solid feel.

The smaller size of the Dare also results in a smaller space for the 3-inch-wide display (compared with the 4-plus-inch displays on the other two phones). Though we were fine with it for most applications, we'll admit that it deters us from enjoying the full HTML browser (which we'll get to in the Features section), since it means we have to do more scrolling than usual. The display supports 262,000 colors and a 240x400-pixel resolution, which results in a stunning and colorful screen with vibrant graphics and clean text. You can adjust the backlight time, the menu fonts, the dial fonts, the display theme, and even the image of the charging screen. You can also choose animated wallpaper if you like.

Along the bottom row of the display's home screen are five shortcut icons to the messaging inbox, the phone interface, the main menu, the phonebook, and a favorites menu (which is a customizable graphical layout of up to nine favorite contacts). There's also a small arrow icon on the far right of the display (about a third of the way down), which leads to a list of 11 shortcuts that you can select from 51 possible applications. You can drag and drop these shortcut icons to change the order in which they appear. However, the coolest thing is that you can also drag and drop them directly to the home screen. Simply tap on an icon and drag it



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The LG Dare has an innovative drag-and-drop menu interface.

traditional grid menu layout (which is a menu style option as well). Throughout the menu interface, you will see a back arrow on the upper left, which will lead you back to the previous screen, and a Home button, which will lead you back to the home screen.

Like the Instinct, the Dare offers haptic tactile feedback, which gives tiny vibrations when tapping on the screen. It's very helpful when selecting menu options, since it provides a physical confirmation of the selection. You can go through a calibration wizard to adjust to the screen's sensitivity, and you can adjust the vibrate type (short, double, or long) and vibrate level (low, medium, high, or off altogether). You can also turn on "vibration when scrolling," which sets off tiny vibrations when scrolling up and down lists. We actually recommend this, so you know you're scrolling through a list and not accidentally selecting something.



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The LG Dare has a virtual QWERTY keyboard.

toward the home screen, and let go. You can then arrange the icons anywhere on your home screen as well.

Going back to the Favorites menu, not only do you have a graphical layout of your favorite contacts, but you can also drag and drop them around the screen. After selecting a contact, you can either have instant access to a new text message or an immediate phone call. You can also edit that contact information on the spot.

Another innovative aspect of the Dare's touch screen is the option for a "scattered" menu interface layout. You can then drag and drop the scattered icons to new positions in the menu. We found this to be quite fun and intuitive, but can't help but think it's rather unnecessary. We would have been just as happy with the

This brings us to the touch interface itself. While we largely enjoyed the touch interface experience, we have to admit there is still a slight learning curve. Often we would select something without meaning to, especially when scrolling up and down lists or dragging icons around. The touch interface is certainly more sensitive than we thought it would be, even after going through the calibration wizard. After a day or two of fiddling around with it though, we learned to adjust.

We found dialing and texting to be quite easy, even with the touch-screen interface. The phone interface consists of the standard numeric keypad, a voice

command button, a handwriting button that will let you "write" the numbers instead of using the keypad, plus two shortcuts to the recent calls list and the contacts list. The keypad features nice big numbers, and after you're done dialing, you can hit either the green Call button, or the physical Talk button on the lower left. There's also a Save key for storing new phone numbers. During a call, a few shortcut icons appear to activate the speakerphone, call mute, send a text message, add a note, connect to a Bluetooth headset, and even voice record.

There are several input options for texting. You can either use the virtual T9 keypad, or you can twist the phone 90 degrees in the counterclockwise direction and a QWERTY keyboard will automatically appear. We're then able to tap on each key with our thumbs. Tapping each key will magnify that key momentarily, just like on the iPhone. The keyboard has a dedicated space bar, return button, period, and alias (@) keys, plus a Shift button to switch between capital letters and other symbols. Unlike the iPhone, you can indeed copy and paste text, simply by highlighting with your fingers and hitting a Copy button. However, the Dare doesn't correct your spelling.

Hide Review [Next page](#)



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The LG Dare has a 3.5mm headset jack.

Another method for entering text would be via handwriting, or a graffiti method. The handwriting recognition works quite well, but we did have some problems with it. For one thing, we had to keep switching modes between capital letters, lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols--it wasn't smart enough to figure out the characters on its own. Also, it's a lot easier to handwrite with a stylus, or if you have long fingernails--using just our fingertips resulted in more mistakes.

The Dare also has a proximity sensor that will automatically turn off the LCD while in a call to prevent accidental touch input, similar to the iPhone. It also has a light sensor that adjusts brightness automatically to conserve on battery life. As mentioned above, the Dare has an accelerometer that will rotate the display 90 degrees counterclockwise for certain applications like the browser, the texting keypad, and other applications. For the picture view screen and the music player, the screen can be rotated 360 degrees.

On the left spine of the Dare is a Hold key, a microSD card slot, a speakerphone key, and a USB charging jack. On the top is a 3.5mm headphone jack, while the volume rocker and dedicated camera sit on the right spine. On the back of the phone is the camera lens and LED flash. There's no self-portrait mirror though.

Features

The Dare comes with a generous 1,000-entry contacts list with room in each entry for five numbers and two e-mail addresses. You can also save callers to groups, and you can pair them with a photo and one of 26 polyphonic ringtones. Other essential features include text and multimedia messaging, a vibrate mode, a speakerphone, a calculator, a tip calculator, a calendar, an alarm clock, a stopwatch, a world clock, and a notepad. More advanced features include full Bluetooth support with stereo A2DP, the capability to use the phone as a modem, and file transfer. There's also mobile e-mail, mobile instant messaging, a USB mass storage mode, voice command and voice dialing, voice recording, and GPS functionality via Verizon's [VZ Navigator service](#). Mobile e-mail is restricted to popular Web mail services such as Hotmail, Yahoo, and AOL, so it's not nearly as robust as using a smartphone.

A nice bonus feature on the Dare is a drawing pad. This pad lets you sketch little doodles or draw a rough map with a variety of pen sizes and colors. You can then send this image to your friends via MMS if you wish.

The Dare has a full HTML browser. It won't support Flash, but that's fine for a phone such as this. As we mentioned earlier, you can rotate the phone to display the browser in landscape mode, which makes entering URLs a lot easier via the QWERTY keyboard. However, the browser experience is nowhere as clean as the Safari browser on the iPhone. Zooming in and out is a pain--we had to use either the onscreen controls or the volume keys to do so. Panning the browser page with our fingers took some time, as the screen responded slowly. Also, since the display is small, we often had to do a lot of scrolling to see everything. Alternatively, if we zoomed out to see the browser page in full-screen mode, the text would be too small to read (The camera key can be used to see the full screen overview as well). You can bookmark pages as well as send URLs to your friends via e-mail, which is a nice touch. However, the overall experience left us cold, and we almost would rather opt for the stripped-down mobile versions of the Web sites instead.

Of course, since the Dare is on the Verizon EV-DO network, it also has access to Verizon's broadband services in the form of V Cast Video and [V CastMusic](#). The V Cast Video and V Cast Music experience is the same as that on other phones. However, the music player interface is quite improved over what we've seen before. There are shortcut icons to Play All, Shop, and Sync, which correspond to the full playlist, the V Cast Music store, and USB syncing respectively. Songs are automatically categorized by genre, artist, and album, and settings include repeat and shuffle. When playing a song, you get the typical play, pause, and track shuttle controls, plus you get to see album art as well. There's even a pseudo Cover Flow that lets you flick through songs by moving your finger across the screen. The Dare also has something called Background Mode Music that lets you listen to music in the background while doing other things--the music pauses when you receive calls, and when the call ends, the music will resume where you left off. The Dare has a microSD card slot that supports up to 8GB of additional storage.

Arguably, the best feature of the Dare, however, lies in its 3.2-megapixel camera. You can take pictures in five resolutions (2,048x1,536, 1,600x1,200, 1,280x960, 640x480, and 320x240), five white balance presets, five color effects, four ISO settings (Auto ISO, ISO 100, ISO 200,



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The LG Dare has a 3.2-megapixel camera on the back, plus an LED flash.



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The LG Dare has excellent photo quality.

You can record videos in 120 frames per second (fps) and then play it back with 15fps slow motion. This is the first phone in the U.S. that has this functionality. Video quality was surprisingly decent. The action movements looked blurry with some jerkiness, but it's not that bad for a camera phone. You can trim videos plus add fade effects as well.

You can personalize the Dare with lots of wallpaper, graphics, sounds, alert tones, and more. The Dare doesn't come with any games, but you can download them, as well as more graphics and sounds, via the Web browser.

Performance

We [tested](#) the LG Dare in San Francisco using [Verizon Wireless](#) service. Call quality was

and ISO 400), and six preset scenes. Other camera settings include spot or average photometry, multishot, three shutter sounds (with a silent option), auto focus, a self-timer, flash, and four different shot types (Normal, Panorama, Split, and Frame). It even offers face detection to ensure someone's face is in focus and noise reduction, which reduces the amount of artifacts in an image. Most notably, however, is something called SmartPic technology, which enhances images with face color compensation (dubbed Smart Beauty), as well as light compensation (dubbed Smart Light)--especially in low light situations.

The Dare has an excellent Schneider-Kreuznach certified lens that promises excellent [photo quality](#), and it delivers. Images looked sharp, with accurate colors, and everything looked in focus. After you take your picture, you are presented with an array of image-editing options, such as zooming, rotating, cropping, changing the contrast, sharpening, and blurring. You can even use your finger to doodle over the image, or edit it with frames, effects, and stamps.

The built-in camcorder isn't too shabby either. It's one of the first camera phones to record up to three resolutions (176x144, 320x240, and 640x240 VGA)--the VGA format is only for storing on the device, since MMS can't support files that large yet. You can record videos up to 470KB for MMS. Settings are similar to that of the still camera. Another bonus option is the ability for high-speed video recording.

absolutely excellent. Voices sounded loud and clear, with almost no static and echo. Callers said we still sounded like we were on a cell phone, but other than that, there was no distortion. Even when we used the speakerphone, callers said there was little to no difference in sound quality. On our end, callers sounded great as well. Speakerphone quality was a tad on the tinny and hollow side, but we could still hear them just fine. We also paired the Dare with the [Plantronics Discovery 925 Bluetooth headset](#) without a problem.

We were very impressed with the EV-DO Rev. A speeds. Web pages loaded in mere seconds, and it took about a minute to download a 1.5MB song. V Cast videos loaded without a lot of rebuffering, though streaming video quality still looked pretty pixelated. Sound quality was very good as well; the speaker has decent sound output, but we would rather use a stereo headset instead.

The LG Dare has a rated [battery life](#) of 4.6 hours of talk time and 15 days of standby time. Our tests revealed a talk time of 4 hours and 57 minutes. According to FCC radiation tests, the LG Dare has a [digital SAR rating](#) of 1.09 watts per kilogram.

[Previous page](#)